

[*For Private Circulation.*]

REPORT OF AID

GIVEN TO

Destitute Mothers and Infants.

Our last Report included the year beginning February 1st, 1875, and ending January 31st, 1876. Finding it for some reasons more convenient to begin our year with the first of January, our present Report covers only eleven months, from February 1st, 1876, to January 1st, 1877.

We have been enabled during the last few months to make the board of our women and infants slightly less expensive. Notwithstanding, a little more money has been spent in these eleven months, than during those that preceded them. It has been extremely difficult lately to find employment, and wages having become lower, it is hard for a mother to earn her infant's board, even at a somewhat diminished rate. We have also had several cases where prolonged illness or weakness made it impossible for a mother to work, except at the risk of permanent injury to her health: several, where with the greatest desire to obtain work, there was for some time, no work to be procured; and several where employment only partially furnishes the means of support for the child, and which, therefore, need assistance for some time.

The price of an infant's board is usually \$3.00 a week, although in some cases, we are obliged to pay \$3.50; while an unskilled, female servant, earns perhaps only \$2.00, or even less. Such a woman, if she wishes to keep her child, must receive help not for a few weeks only, but through the year. Wet-nurses, and those who

obtain high wages, are able to support their children entirely. When a child is two years old, it can usually be boarded for \$2.50, sometimes for \$2.00 a week.

The following statistics may be of interest :

Assisted with money,.....	68	American,	17
“ without money,.....	16	Irish,	24
Whole number assisted,	84	German,	4
Married women,.....	22	Swedish,.....	3
Unmarried “	62	Scotch,.....	3
	84	British Provinces,.....	3
		French,.....	2
		English,.....	1
		French & English,	1
		Scotch & English,	1
		Scotch & Irish,.....	1
		Scotch & German,....	1
		Danish,.....	1
			62
Age of Unmarried Women.		Doing well and seen or heard	
16 years old,	2	from recently,.....	48
17 “ “	4	Supposed to be doing well, but	
18 “ “	5	removed from our charge by	
19 “ “	11	friends,	7
20 “ “	10	Not doing well,.....	4
21 “ “	5	Doubtful,	2
22 “ “	6	Dead,.....	1
23 “ “	6		
24 “ “	6		
25 “ “	4		
Over 25,	3		
	62		62

It may be asked, in what way our work differs from that of several excellent Institutions. Our object is three-fold.

1st. To provide for destitute mothers, both married and unmarried, a safe and comfortable shelter for a short period previous to their reception at the Maternity Hospitals, and to give them two or three weeks board after they leave the Hospital, before they are yet able to work.

2d. To extend a helping hand to those women who have made one false step, but are comparatively innocent, and desirous to lead a virtuous and respectable life.

3d. To provide suitable boarding-places for those infants who are necessarily separated from their mothers, and to visit them at these boarding-places, seeing that they have the care that they require.

1st. To provide mothers with shelter, before they are received at the Hospitals, and to give them two or three weeks board for convalescence, after they are discharged.

A woman who applies for admission to a Maternity Hospital, has often no home in which to remain until the Hospital can receive her. She is perhaps incapable of doing hard work, and must be sheltered for a time. A few weeks board may preserve to her her child's health and her own; and thus, indirectly, the means of earning her child's support. To a virtuous and respectable woman, overtaken by poverty, or deserted by an unworthy husband, this help is of immense importance. To a woman who has once fallen, it is of so much the more importance, as it may preserve her not only from poverty and illness, but also from mental and moral ruin. The same may be said of the two or three weeks convalescence, given after the patient leaves the Hospital. Few women are able to *work*, three weeks after the birth of a child, yet they cannot remain in the Hospital if they no longer require medical treatment and nursing, but must give place to others. The need of help at this period has been felt, both by the New England Hospital for women, and by the Lying-in Hospital in Boston. Students and nurses of the New England Hospital, have sometimes spoken to us of the reluctance they felt to have a woman discharged who had for weeks been nursed with the utmost assiduity, knowing that there was no possibility of her having the care and rest necessary for her complete restoration. Several physicians connected with the Hospitals of Boston, who feel a kindly interest in the welfare of their patients, have expressed to us their gratification, that a want so long felt, should now be met.*

2d. To extend a helping hand to those women who have made one false step, but are sincerely desirous to retrieve their character, and lead a respectable and virtuous life.

The moment of leaving the Hospital is one of great peril to an unmarried mother. If she has parents they are sometimes unwilling to receive her, or to have any further intercourse with her; where the family are not estranged from her by her fault, they

* See Report of N. E. Hospital for Women, for year ending Sept. 30th, 1874, and Report of Boston Lying-in Hospital, of the present year.

are often incapable from poverty, of giving her practical assistance. But more often still, she has no near relative, and no friends to whom she can look for help; since it is not usually those who have loving parents and happy homes, who fall into trouble; more frequently, young girls whose parents have died while they were children, or from whom they have long been separated. To a young woman in this lonely and desperate condition, friendship and sympathy are of the greatest importance, and are usually received with heartfelt gratitude.

3d. The care and supervision of those infants who must necessarily be separated from their mothers.

We make it our aim to help those mothers who love their children, and desire to support them, and on no account to provide for a child whose mother wishes merely to be relieved from the charge of it. Such cases are few, but are sometimes met. Usually an unmarried mother is as strongly attached to her child as another; such, at least, is the conclusion we should draw from the cases that come under our observation. And the saving power of this love, and its strengthening and purifying influence over the mother's character is very great. If she can obtain a situation in a family, retaining her child with her, she needs but little help from us. If she must place the child at board, but can visit it often, we help her to select a boarding place, and often give advice and assistance, visiting the infant ourselves, when it is necessary. If the mother's work necessarily separates her from the child so that she sees it at long intervals only, the whole of the care and supervision of the infant devolves upon us.

We find some difficulties of a practical nature, which we hope may lessen with time.

Before a patient is received at one of the maternity hospitals mentioned, she is sometimes for weeks or even months, without a home. In such cases—that is, where a long time must elapse during which she is able to do only light work—we endeavor to find a situation for her in some family where she may work for her board, or for low wages. But it is not always possible to make this arrangement; when it is out of our power to do so, she must be boarded at our expense. But it is better for the woman, phy-

sically and morally, that she should work, and we frequently have women of good character, but temporarily destitute, who could make themselves useful by house-work or sewing, if excused from heavy work, and allowed a reasonable portion of time for rest and exercise. The services they are able to render are well worth their board, but the difficulty is to communicate with families who may require such assistance.

On leaving the Hospital, many mothers desire to find homes with their children; but this is difficult, though such a home is occasionally found, and we rejoice to say that we have several times received the testimony of employers, as to the satisfactory result of such an arrangement. A small family living in the country, will sometimes employ a woman with a child, in consideration of a reduction in wages. When unable to find such a situation, the mother and child must separate, the child being placed at board, while the mother earns its living and her own by any work that she can procure. If able to visit her infant often, she still retains her love and interest for it, though losing the happiness that its constant presence would give. But if separated from it entirely, by the nature of her work, the tie between mother and child is necessarily weakened; thus she loses not only an object for which to live, and the source of much comfort and happiness, but also her greatest incentive to a virtuous life. Our own observation, and the testimony of others whose experience is larger by many years, has convinced us that the most powerful motive a woman can have for leading a virtuous life, is the love and care of her child. Where she is strongly attached to it, the danger to her own character incurred by the separation, is very great. Too much stress cannot be laid upon this fact. Hoping that many more such homes might be found, were it only known generally that they are needed, we earnestly request all those who may read this Report, to bear this need in mind, and to speak of it as they may find opportunity, communicating with us on the subject. The good that may be done in this way is incalculable.

There is another class of patients for whom it is difficult to provide; those who leave the Hospital in delicate health, and yet no

longer require medical treatment. They are usually able to do a little light work, but families, in engaging a servant, look for more than this. And to remain unemployed for many months is disheartening, as well as injurious. These cases are few, and if they could be received into families, and allowed to do light work for their board, it would be the greatest benefit to them, and a heavy burden taken from our shoulders. Help of this kind does more good than money, necessary as that may be.

We desire to call the attention of our friends to an important and very painful fact. We have been shocked and surprised, to find that so many of the cases that have come under our observation, are those of respectable and modest young women, who have met with misfortune in consequence of exposure in families where they have lived at service. The mistress of a household is often not aware of the risk which a thoughtless and inexperienced girl runs, in being left at times, without the oversight of those who are less ignorant than herself of the dangers to which she is exposed.

We are sometimes asked: "Is it not encouraging vice, to assist a woman who has once fallen? Is it not better to allow her to suffer the consequences of her fault?" Our answer is, "The suffering is inevitable; but it is encouraging vice not to assist her." For, when a woman, young, ignorant and friendless, comes forth from the Hospital, which can offer her shelter but for a few weeks; perhaps unskilled in labor, so that her utmost earnings will not provide the support of her infant, much less feed and clothe both mother and child—where will she turn, in this extremity? The doors of vice are always open—the wages of sin are large; the tempters are easily to be met. It is at this moment that a friendly hand is needed, to draw back the forlorn young creature, trembling upon the brink of ruin. If, like priest and Levite, we pass by upon the other side, we are not guiltless of her fate.

To hear of these poor young girls is a different thing from meeting them, face to face, and hand to hand, in the hour of their peril. We are asked if we do not meet with disappointments, and disheartening failures, in so difficult and perplexing a work. This does not often happen, and when it does, we are encouraged by the thought of the large proportion of cases where our efforts have been rewarded by all the success that could be wished.

The women whom we help, differ from each other in character, and each one is assisted as her individual need may require. Of many, we feel that they are almost certain to do well, if helped at the right moment, and in the right way. Of others, we know that they *may* do well, and they *may* disappoint us. But, all the more for this doubt, are we sure, that if no one cares for them, there is danger that they will fall into sin. If we can do something toward saving from earthly and spiritual ruin any of God's children, we, and the friends who help us, may well thank God and take courage.

For the visitors.

MRS. JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE,
MRS. WILLIAM BRADLEY.

February 23, 1877.

Received from Feb. 1, 1876, to January 1, 1877.

On hand Feb. 1, 1876,	\$1240.04	Amount brought over,	\$1929.04
A Friend,	10.00	Mrs. G. H. Shaw,	25.00
A Friend,	10.00	Miss A. de V. Solier,	10.00
A Friend,	2.00	Miss M. A. Wales,	20.00
"A Gift," (by Dr. C. P. Putnam)	40.00	Miss Amy White,	5.00
Anonymous, " " " "	30.00	Mrs. J. H. Wolcott,	30.00
Mrs. William Bradley,	2.00	Repaid by persons assisted.	93.40
Mrs. C. C. Chadwick,	20.00		
Mrs. Lydia Maria Child,	20.00	Total Received,	\$2112.44
Mrs. T. Jefferson Coolidge,	50.00		
Miss A. D. (by Dr. C. P. Putnam),	20.00	Expended from February 1st, 1876,	
Miss A. W. Davis,	10.00	to January 1st, 1877.	
Dr. E. H. Derby,	50.00	Board of Women,	\$843.12
Wm. Endicott, jr.	25.00	Board of Infants,	793.25
Mrs. James T. Fields,	10.00	Clothing for Women,	40.55
Miss M. Louisa Goddard,	5.00	Clothing for Infants,	121.33
Mrs. William B. Greene,	200.00	Advertising,	30.13
Mrs. O. W. Holmes,	5.00	Travelling,	55.88
Miss Anna C. Lowell,	30.00	Furniture,	16.25
Mrs. A. T. Lyman,	20.00	Medicine	7.50
Mrs. F. W. G. May,	10.00	Hospital Fees,	46.00
Miss M. R. Parkman,	20.00	Printing,	24.00
Mrs. M. L. Putnam,	20.00	Soap, Condensed Milk, Ridge's	
A. R.	20.00	Food, Washing, etc., etc.	73.16
Mrs. — Reed,	5.00		
Miss Ann S. Robbins,	5.00	On hand Jan. 1, 1877,	\$2051.17
Mrs. G. R. Russell.	50.00		61.27
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	\$1929.04		\$2112.44

Subscriptions may be sent to Mrs. James Freeman Clarke, Jamaica Plain, or to Dr. C. P. Putnam, 63 Marlboro' Street, Boston.